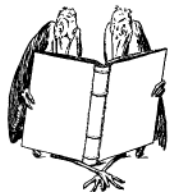


BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

Since I've been reviewing gentle, informative books for the last few months, I'm returning to an awesome birding adventure in order to return to somewhat of a balance. I think you'll enjoy *A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders and Their Quest to See it All* by Luke Dempsey. It should be fun to read for pure enjoyment. It's chock full of real belly laughs; a gentle and often contemplative memoir that is hilarious at the same time.

The author descends from utter respectability to the depths of "birding insanity." He has written a most-engaging story of his initiation into our birding tribe. He has a fairly quirky style that you'll find interesting from the beginning. So begins his epic journey around our country in search of those rarities we all crave to see! To make his adventure all the



more insane, he creates two fellow birders to accompany him on this crazy quest. This book is an ode to avian beauty as well as a travelogue of the back roads of America. His adventure begins with early morning walks in Central Park (who hasn't?) and this craziness grows to every weekend morning. If you're like me and appreciate books that are extremely passionate and also about animals and nature, you will be enjoying this book already. He creates a travelogue of a man with a genuine passion for his subject as well as a penchant for noticing small details of the country around him. His initial focus is on the most-accessible birding location near his office, the aforementioned Central Park, which he birds with extreme enjoyment. He often takes bird-watching to the next level (insanity?).

It's obvious, throughout this book, that Luke cares a great deal about animals, nature, and our planet. This book begins innocently enough with a small bird flitting around Luke's backyard, which his two friends point out. From this point on, he falls head over heels for both birds and birding. He proceeds to take birding and make it cool! (Is this possible?) As many of us know, this is *not* easy to do! If we don't feel it already, he will instill in us an appreciation for a pastime you might never have thought much about.

His stories of major trips to see birds across America often show off his formidable birding skills. His message about conservation and our vanishing natural resources will certainly resonate with most of us far better than a dour polemic (think *Green Birding* from three newsletters ago). There's nothing better than a good laugh and a serious message delivered at the same time! This is a super funny book that you will find well worth reading. This informative and engaging author shows an appreciation of the wonders, beauty, and fragility of our natural world. It is supremely entertaining, even inspirational. Read it and ENJOY!

TACKAPAUSHA PARTY

Marilyn Hametz

The South Shore Audubon Annual Holiday Party for Children with the Tackapausha Museum is scheduled for **Saturday, December 14**. At the party, from 1 to 4 P.M., we will be providing light refreshments and will have tables for making feeders for birds. Wildlife demonstrations and additional crafts are included in the party.

This special event is a great time to visit the museum with your children or grandchildren. Admission is \$5 per person; children under age 5 are admitted free of charge.

If you would like to enjoy the event as a South Shore Audubon volunteer, please contact me at 799-7189 or marilynexpl@yahoo.com.

The Tackapausha Museum and Preserve is located at 2255 Washington Avenue (north of Merrick Road) in Seaford, telephone 571-7443.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Library from 7:30-9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since last month's *Skimmer* are:

Bethpage	Eugenia Mazzara
Cedarhurst	John S. Adams
East Rockaway	Connie L. Mastro
Farmingdale	Joseph Carosella
Floral Park	Judith Muller
Lido Beach	L. Leone
Malverne	Jocelyn Nuttall
Massapequa	Catherine Boutemysi
Massapequa Park	Krzysztofa Michalik
Merrick	Douglas Smestad
Roosevelt	Mary Taylor
Valley Stream	Jirina Fishman



All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and lists of what we've seen may be found at ssaudubon.org.

- Nov. 24 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Dec. 1 Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot)
- Dec. 8 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Dec. 15 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
- Dec. 22 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Dec. 29 Pelham Bay Park*
- Jan. 5 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Jan. 12 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Jan. 19 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)
- Jan. 26 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
- Feb. 2 Massapequa Lake**

*For Pelham Bay Park (where we hope to see owls): Wear hiking shoes — it's a hilly forest walk to the bay. Take Throgs Neck Bridge to I-695 north to I-95 north. Take I-95 to exit #9, Hutchinson River Parkway north. Take first exit #5, Orchard Beach Rd., go past traffic circle ☉, and continue on Orchard Beach Rd. to end. Turn left on Park Dr. to enter park. Go past another traffic circle ☉ and enter parking lot thru toll gates (free); meet at far left corner of parking lot (northeast corner). See <http://mappery.com/Pelham-Bay-Park-NYC-Map> for reference.

**For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.

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CHRISTMAS TREE & BIRD FEEDING MYTHS

Editor's note: The following two questions and answers come from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's collection of "Myth Busters," which is archived at www.dec.ny.gov/public/45772.html.

Q: Using a fake tree will save a real tree — right?

A: Almost all Christmas trees are grown as crops on Christmas tree farms, not in forests. Using real trees instead of artificial trees benefits the environment in several ways:

▲ While they are growing, they soak up carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change (the manufacturing process for plastic trees emits greenhouse gases).

▲ They are renewable: growers plant one to three seedlings for each tree harvested.

▲ Trees are typically collected by municipalities to be chipped and recycled as mulch after the season (artificial trees are not biodegradable and can't be recycled.)

▲ If you purchase a locally grown Christmas tree, both fuel used and greenhouse gas released during shipping are kept to a minimum (most artificial trees are manufactured in Asia and shipped overseas to New York). Look for the "Pride of New York" emblem on your real tree to make sure it was grown in New York or search for a Christmas tree farm in your area.

Bottom line: If you already have a glittery pink plastic tree and you love it, by all means, enjoy! And please enjoy it for many years, because it's not biodegradable and it can't be recycled. If necessary, will it to your grandchildren to keep it out of the waste stream. But if you like real trees, there is no need to feel guilty.

For the extremely green — use a living tree that can be planted outside. [*Editor's comment:* Use a native species.]

Q: I feed the birds in the winter. If I go on vacation, will the birds starve?

A: It's not likely.

Birds look far and wide for food, and will consume up to three-quarters of their diet at places other than your feeder. If your feeder is empty, they'll look for food elsewhere, either from natural sources or other feeders. Some birds, such as chickadees, nuthatches, some woodpeckers, and Blue Jays (pictured), stash food away in crevices for times when their usual sources aren't available.



A big winter storm while you are away can make things harder for your feathered friends. Deep snow may cover the food of ground-feeding species, and a storm that coats everything with a quarter of an inch or more of ice will increase many species' need for supplemental food. If others in your neighborhood are home, filling their feeders, the birds will go there. Birds will cover hundreds of acres in their search for winter food, so unless yours is the only feeder for miles, they'll be fine.

If you'll be gone for more than a week, taper off feeding gradually beforehand. Better yet, have a neighbor or friend stop by to restock your feeder while you're away.

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NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
Three Highlights of a Pine Barrens Walk

Joe Grupp

We arrived at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge on the first fall morning that had that winter chill in the air. The autumn foliage was at or just past peak and enhanced the beauty of the dominant green color of the pine forest. Established in 1934, the preserve covers an area of 305 acres. Once managed in cooperation with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, it is now independently run. Comprised of mostly natural areas, it also provides programs for the public, has a fairly large display of animals that cannot be released into the wild, a very few small buildings, and a nature center that also may be used for meetings, programs, etc. Near the entrance, a pond that the nature center looks over and is the centerpiece of the preserve was constructed well before the land became a preserve; it functioned as a commercial ice harvesting venture and has now, for all practical purposes, become part of the natural landscape. Beyond it are acres of pine barrens forest, including a section of the rare dwarf pine barrens habitat.

Leaving our car and while just about to enter the entrance gate, we were stopped short by a flurry of activity high in the trees that edge one side of the small parking lot. A small flock of a dozen or more birds had flown into the leafy area of one tree. About half of the flock arrived at one time, with the rest following in twos and threes, all becoming part of the activity and the fluttering of wings taking place among the branches. It did not take long to realize that they were Cedar Waxwings (pictured), but we saw the details of the species in pieces as the birds moved among the branches. We would get a good look at the pointed crown of a bird as it paused for a moment and then moved out of view, then the soft tan color of another, black mask of yet another, etc.



Walking well into the refuge, we entered the pine forest where, on this day, we seemed to leave other birdlife behind us even as we did spot a few Hermit Thrushes during that phase of our walk. Light from a low autumn sun penetrated the forest, sending the shadows of the multitude of pitch pine trees on the sun's side of the forest across the trail. Sunlight that was not blocked fell upon the trees on the opposite side of the trail, enhancing their subtle beauty. I then began to notice things about those trees that I may not have noticed at all under different conditions. There was the yellow-green color of the needles of this year's growth at the tips of each branch, followed by the light tan color of the now dead needles of last year's growth that the trees were shedding, followed by the weathered gray portion of the branch as it led to the trunk. Some of the branches had a few cones on them. Those

cones of this year's growth were tightly closed and tan in color; the previous year's cones were weathered gray and tightly closed, waiting for extreme heat such as that of a fire to open them up so they could release their seeds. Some were opened and harshly weathered, having scattered their seeds sometime in the past.

Fallen needles carpeted the forest floor, softening our steps as we walked. Pitch pine needles are joined three in a bundle and secured together by plant tissue at one end, while spreading apart from each other at the other, open end of the bundle. Thin-branched shrubs of the understory were covered with hanging pine needle bundles. When they fell from the pines, one of the needles of the open end of the bundle by chance fell on one side of a shrub's branch and the rest on the other, leaving the bundle hanging there, open side down. The slightest breeze sent ripples through those hanging needle bundles; a stronger breeze would have just blown them away.

We completed our walk, following the trail across the pond's dam to the entrance gate. About halfway across the dam, we found ourselves among a number of small birds. They were in almost constant motion, active in the tall shrubs and saplings on the pond side of the dam, crossing the trail to the shrubs below us on the dry side of the dam, and flying to and from a small nearby island in the pond. At times they were within arm's reach or just above our heads. Two or three times I had one right by my foot. No binoculars needed for identification; they were Golden-crowned Kinglets. One by my foot was a male with its orange cap showing; another was a female with its yellow cap showing. We stood there for a while and just let it all happen around us, and then it was time to go home.

26TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The dates for our 2013-2014 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, December 7, January 4, February 1, February 22, and March 22.** Volunteers are welcome to participate in the surveys. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call Joe Grupp, SSAS's Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

Phone: (516) 931-1445
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GATEWAY MANAGEMENT PLAN

After the 16-day Federal government shutdown ended in mid October, SSAS submitted the following comments via Gateway National Recreation Area's Web site (www.nps.gov/gate/parkmgmt/gmp-2012.htm) regarding the Draft General Management Plan that was issued in July (see last September's *Skimmer* for details).

"The South Shore Audubon Society strongly supports the closing — as soon as possible — of the breach affecting the West Pond of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. South Shore is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and represents approximately 1,700 households on the South Shore of Long Island. To us, the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is the heart of Gateway National Recreation Area and is a national treasure. Our members visit the refuge individually, and our chapter routinely conducts nature walks there, but perhaps more importantly, it is a famous destination site for birders from all over the world. The West Pond provided an important habitat for numerous bird species that live in fresh water and does not exist elsewhere nearby. This valuable habitat must be restored to its wildlife-friendly pre-Sandy condition by closing the saltwater breach in an efficient and timely way so that the Pond can once again be made a thriving freshwater environment. We urge the National Park Service to move quickly to restore this premier wildlife refuge and Important Bird Area to its former, pre-Sandy, glory.

OUR ANNUAL LIBRARY DONATION

Freeport Memorial Library's Director recently sent the following letter to Jim Brown.

Dear Mr. Brown:

On behalf of the Freeport Memorial Library, I would like to thank you and the members of the South Shore Audubon Society for your generous donation of \$500. As you suggested, the funds will be used to increase our collection of nature oriented publications. All materials purchased will have a bookplate added as a note of thanks.

We are grateful for this contribution because it will help all of the residents of Freeport become more aware of the precious natural heritage we share. We are also honored that the South Shore Audubon Society has continued to hold its meetings at the library.

Sincerely,

Ken Bellafore, Library Director

The books and videos that have been purchased as a result of decades of donations from SSAS are available as interlibrary loans throughout Long Island. A search for the subject "birds" at www.alisweb.org shows that Freeport has 195 entries, which is third to Levittown and Great Neck for the most in a Nassau County library.

NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

BROOKSIDE PRESERVE

Rich Kopsco

Thank you to a group of 18 volunteers from the Freeport office of the DB Schenker shipping company, led by Deniz Tanacan, who did a cleanup at SSAS-managed Brookside on October 11 and, as this *Skimmer* was being printed, were scheduled to do a second one on November 15.

POSEIDON TRANSMISSION APPLICATION

Michael Sperling

On September 30, Poseidon Transmission I, LLC (whose parent company, Anbaric Transmission, was also responsible for the Neptune Regional Transmission System whose cable was buried alongside the Wantagh Parkway in 2007) submitted an application with the NYS Public Service Commission for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need authorizing the construction of an underground/submarine 500 MW electric transmission line from South Brunswick, New Jersey to LIPA's Ruland Road Substation in Melville. According to Poseidon's Notice of Application Filing, "the submarine cable will be buried in the seabed and enter Long Island at Jones Beach State Park; from there the cable will be buried underground in state parkland and underground in a combination of state parkway and state, county, and town highway and road corridors, coming above ground at a new converter station... located in Melville... Poseidon's preferred cable route north of Jones Beach State Park follows portions of the Wantagh State Parkway and Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway and parallel local roads, crosses the northwestern corner of Bethpage State Park, and follows Round Swamp Road, Winding Road, the northern edge of Bethpage State Park, the SUNY Farmingdale campus and Ruland Road."

On October 31, a preliminary review by the NYS Department of Public Service found the application to be deficient, which will delay the start of the public review process. You can download the documents regarding this project by searching for case number 13-T-0391 at www.dos.ny.gov (they cannot be viewed online), or ask for them at the Bethpage, Farmingdale, Massapequa (both branches), Plainedge, Plainview-Old Bethpage, Seaford, and Wantagh Public Libraries (plus two libraries outside of SSAS's territory).

SSAS Mission Statement — *The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.*



South Shore Audubon Society
P.O. Box 31
Freeport, NY 11520-0031

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Americans Committed to Conservation



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BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$20 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

Option 2. To join NAS and your all-volunteer local chapter, you can help SSAS by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 from these dues unless you join through us). Mail the form below and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household.



Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS (the approx. \$3/year we get per member is not based on renewals).



Donations to SSAS are always welcome! \$_____

Yes, I'd like to join: SSAS only National Audubon too

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